

Implementing a hands-on outreach program at the University of Saskatchewan to promote geoscience awareness to K-12 students

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Summary

Geoscience communication is becoming a fundamental aspect of the resource industry. The University of Saskatchewan Geological Sciences Department has implemented a new geosciences outreach program to engage communities and public education. This program offers K-12 students the opportunity to visit the department and have a two-hour lesson taught on various topics taught by volunteer students, including rocks and minerals, fossils, plate tectonics, meteorite impacts, and volcanoes. This program is created as a resource for teachers to allow students a hands-on experience with exposure to physical samples and activities.

Results, Observations, Conclusions

We have received positive feedback and increased demand in rural communities of Saskatchewan after 18 months of conducting the program. Teachers express the value of high-quality specimens, knowledge from the volunteers and the hands-on components which results in greater comprehension of the material compared to traditional lecturing methods. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for the volunteers to develop communication skills while keeping introductory concepts fresh. We identify that the key components to building a successful outreach program include acquiring funding, partnerships with organizations, building a strong specimen collection, maintaining a presence on social media platforms, creating hands-on experiments, promoting discussion, and providing take-home memorabilia. This program demonstrates that public awareness of geology is an increasingly demanded subject to understand how our everyday lives are influenced by the earth.

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